

# A Structural Approach to Inmate Management: Orange County's Inmate Management System

*by Tom L. Allison  
Director, Orange County  
Division of Corrections,  
Orlando, Florida*

Every jail facility has a system for dealing with inmates that encompasses the sum total of how the institution responds to inmates, in both positive and negative terms. Typically, although the system is well established by many policies and procedures, it is usually implemented only through informal means. The process of formalizing an Inmate Management System (IMS) requires developing a plan and educating all staff and inmates in how it works. Unfortunately, in many facilities this system is not formally defined, nor is the IMS consistently applied by all staff. This lack of a formal IMS means that a valuable tool is underutilized and potential inmate control lost. More than jail design and function, the understanding and development of an IMS are of prime importance in the operation of jail facilities.

Looking at the functions in a jail facility as a total system allows every individual within that system to have input into and knowledge about how the system is going to

work. The goal of an IMS is to provide information to all parties as to desired behavior, consequences, and rewards. All staff must have input into the development of the system and be held accountable to carry out responsibilities within their realm of authority. Inmates must be educated about the choices available to them and must be given information on how the system will react to their behavior.

The Inmate Management System in the Orange County Division of Corrections, Orlando, Florida, is based on the staff's immediate reaction to the positive or negative behavior of the inmate population. The IMS stresses the control of the **collective** behavior of the inmate population and attempts to provide an atmosphere that encourages individual change. Further, the system is integrated into the concept and principles of "Direct Supervision."

The purposes of an inmate management system are the following:

- To provide positive control of inmates;
- To achieve control in the most economical way possible;

- To provide a positive working atmosphere for staff;
- To prepare inmates for re-entry into the community; and
- To effect a change in individual inmate behavior.

Positive control of inmates is accomplished through a variety of incentives that an inmate may choose if his/her behavior warrants rewarding. These incentives include enhanced amenities, such as housing areas, color televisions, unlimited telephone use, educational programs, and contact visitation.

Not only must inmates be controlled and supervised, but this must be achieved in the most cost-effective manner possible. The use of an IMS plan allows optimum utilization of staff and resources throughout the facility. The system will ultimately provide the most economical means to operate the facility. The goal of the system is to provide the best utilization of existing facilities and to lower the security level of housing required in the future. Moreover, the use of less expensive conventional furniture, lavatory fixtures, and doors and locks significantly reduced the initial construction costs.

Utilized properly, an IMS offers a sense of “job ownership” to all correctional officers and staff in the system, thus promoting a positive working atmosphere. Staff must believe that their role is vital to the system. This belief then becomes a positive force in providing job satisfaction and improving the work atmosphere.

The provision of incentives to well-behaved inmates also routinely results in a better working environment for the staff. Instead of coming on shift saying, “I wonder how many fights I’ll have to break up today?,” correctional officers have a confident feeling that any disagreements that may occur will be handled through their use of interpersonal communications skills rather than force and that their actions will be supported by the administration.

This feeling of support is fostered by a parallel staff management system that encourages employees to make decisions within their level of authority and to assume responsibility for those decisions. When staff know they are accountable for the results of their decisions, the system promotes more judicious decisions and encourages decision making within the guidelines of established policy and procedure.

The flow of information is an important factor in developing and maintaining an IMS. Therefore, mid-management must be expected

to communicate with all staff. Without an appropriate exchange of information from line staff to mid-management to the administration and back again, an IMS will not work.

An IMS should provide as many programs to the inmates as possible.

Most of these programs can be provided by local volunteers and agencies at a minimal cost to the jail facility.

Programming provides two distinct opportunities for inmate management. First, the privileges given inmates by the facility may also be taken away. Second, these rehabilitative programs provide inmates re-entering the community an opportunity for change.

A wide variety of programs are offered in the Orange County Corrections Division to prepare inmates to return to the community. These programs range from the most basic General Education Degree and Adult Basic Education classes to advanced programs that train inmates in computer programming, blueprint reading, and basic electronics.

To facilitate changes in individual behavior, inmates are given the latitude to make every day and long-term decisions on their own. This decision-making process allows them to learn from their successes

and failures and to properly apply the principles that will guide them into becoming responsible citizens. To fulfill these purposes, it is imperative that staff understand these concepts and apply them uniformly in every aspect of their daily routine. This will encourage

**The main focus of an IMS is to provide an environment in which inmates can make decisions concerning their own behavior.**

mutual support and adherence to the principles of the system at all levels.

The main focus of the system is to provide the proper environment and define the parameters within which inmates are permitted to make decisions concerning their behavior, whether these decisions are positive or negative. The IMS then focuses on the flexibility and freedom permitted at each level. The inmate is then in control of how he/she functions within the guidelines of the facility.

The series of levels, or stair-steps, in the Orange County IMS is based on levels of confinement that encourage positive and productive behavior and discourage inappropriate behavior. The first step in the IMS is initiated during the booking process. Each individual who is arrested is interviewed by staff of the Court Alternatives Department who are working in the

Pre-trial Release Program. This staff person determines if the arrestee qualifies for one of three release programs.

The first program is Population Capacity Release (PCR), which was mandated by the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court to help relieve the overcrowding of Orange County's detention facilities. Individuals considered for release are those who have committed misdemeanors, traffic offenses, or non-violent third degree felonies. These individuals are assigned a court date at the time

**The privileges and amenities afforded at the higher levels provide an incentive for the inmate to move upward.**

of their release to ensure that they are held accountable to the judicial system. From December, 1981 through June, 1988, approximately 60,000 arrested individuals were released under this program.

The second alternative to incarceration is Pre-Trial Release (PTR). The guidelines for release through this program are more stringent than those for PCR. With a PTR release, background checks, prior arrest records, and interview information are reviewed and verified prior to release. An arrestee must ensure local residence and gainful employment to qualify for Pre-Trial Release. He/she must also report to a member of the program

staff on a weekly basis until his/her court appearance.

The third and most innovative release procedure within Orange County is Home Confinement. The home confinement program uses control staff to provide community monitoring on a random schedule, using random drug testing and sophisticated electronic equipment. This program allows individuals who would otherwise be incarcerated to remain in the community to support their families and care for their own needs while supplementing the **costs of their home incarceration.**

**If it is determined that an individual cannot qualify for any of these three**

programs, he/she then enters the second step of the Inmate Management System. Within the 33rd Street Correctional Complex, a system has been devised wherein inmates are controlled, supervised and housed according to their demonstrated behavior. There are four levels within this part of the IMS:

- LEVEL I - Disciplinary and Administrative Confinement
- LEVEL II- 33-8 Cell
- LEVEL III- General Population
- LEVEL IV- Direct Supervision

As an inmate enters the 33rd Street detention facility, his placement in the IMS is determined through the following procedure:

All individuals, except high-risk or special inmates, enter into the system at LEVEL III, General Population, where they remain for a period of thirty days of observation prior to reclassification. The thirty day waiting period may be waived based on an officer's observation of positive or negative inmate behavior.

A reclassification card is created when an inmate is moved from the booking facility. The reclassification card contains the inmate's name, jail number, and other pertinent data. This card is used to record inmate behavior, both positive and negative, as observed by the correctional officer. Card entries must document observed inmate behavior, not just attitude.

During any week, three positive entries enable an inmate to move to a higher level of classification, and three negative entries move an inmate to the next lower level. The move is based solely on the recommendation of the correctional officer.

In the first five days following the move to another behavior-based level, a classification officer reviews the reclassification card to determine the appropriateness of the move. Should the classification officer disagree with the move, the inmate is



returned to his original level of classification. The classification officer is then available to discuss the decision with the correctional officer, if necessary or appropriate.

The incentives for an inmate to move upward through the levels are the privileges and amenities afforded at each level.

LEVEL I is the most restrictive custody level within the Inmate Management System. The only privileges allowed are those set forth by the disciplinary committee and/or the Policies and Procedures on Administrative and Disciplinary Confinement.

At LEVEL II the only privileges afforded to inmates are those set forth by Chapter 33-8 of the Florida Administrative Code. Chapter 33-8, State Mandated Jail Standards, outlines the minimum requirements of what must be provided to persons who are incarcerated in county or municipal detention facilities and provides for periodic inspections to ensure that these standards are maintained.

LEVEL III houses inmates assigned to the general population. These inmates are scheduled for recreation four times per week and for six hours visitation per week. Library privileges are available once a week, and law library services are available on written request. Orders for the commissary are taken three times per week, and church services and other

programs may be attended as scheduled. Each Level III unit has one black and white television per dayroom; a color television is assigned to the cleanest cell each week. The dayroom and telephone are available until lockdown.

LEVEL IV places inmates in a direct supervision status. This environment provides the maximum range of benefits and privileges to the inmate. Indoor recreation is provided seven days a week, with outside recreation scheduled for five days. Contact visitation is scheduled six hours per week, with library and commissary

privileges available as for the general population. There are two color televisions in each dayroom which, along with the telephone (paid for by the Inmate Welfare Fund rather than the County), are available to each inmate 24 hours a day.

Again, if an individual's behavior is inappropriate for the level of confinement at which he/she is assigned, a more restrictive level of confinement will be imposed. Likewise, if behavior is exemplary and an inmate is exceeding behavioral expectations, restrictions of confinement will be lessened, allowing the inmate more freedom and flexibility within his/her daily environment.

Once an inmate has reached LEVEL IV with continued positive behavior, he/she will maintain that status until he is released from the system or transferred to an alternative program. From LEVEL IV an inmate may move on to the "Genesis Unit" where he will continue to function within a direct supervision atmosphere and have the availability of increased rehabilitative opportunities. From LEVEL IV or Genesis, an inmate may also be assigned to work release, home confinement, probation, or be completely released from the system.

**Inmates need to be encouraged to participate in these programs of their own free will; they must take the responsibility for "doing and performing" rather than "saying and observing."**

Within the Work Release Unit an atmosphere of participatory management exists in a facility whose main goal is to facilitate the resident's re-entry into the community. Within this participatory system, staff and residents offer suggestions for the betterment of the facility and work together to achieve common goals. Assigned staff serve as "bay captains" acting as liaisons between the residents and upper-level management and providing a sounding board for complaints, problems, and suggestions.



The incentives for proper behavior in the Work Release Unit include opportunities for gainful employment, designated hours for "furlough" when time may be spent with family and friends, and positive intercession with the courts on behalf of those who present themselves as worthy. Inappropriate behavior such as physical fights, use of drugs, or a furlough violation dictate the immediate return of the offender to traditional incarceration.

Through this type of less restrictive confinement and the additional freedom that probation allows, offenders are given the opportunity to make "positive choices" for their lives. Less restrictive confinement also allows habilitative opportunities to be made available to those who choose to take advantage of them. By providing inmates the means for change through educational, vocational, and psychological programs, the Inmate Management System establishes a positive

environment in which inmates may make positive decisions.

An effective inmate management system also enables correctional personnel to assume responsibility for the condition in which inmates are released from jail. The preparation of inmates to re-enter the community is an enormous task that must be approached thoroughly and judiciously. Inmates need to be encouraged to participate in these programs of their own free will; they must take the responsibility of "doing and performing" rather than "saying and observing." If this is done, then affirmative steps have been taken on the individual's road to successful re-entry.

A good inmate management system allows the inmate to behave however he/she chooses. It also allows staff to react swiftly and appropriately to this behavior. It establishes a positive environment that makes participation in programs meaningful and worthwhile, while it defines

negative behavior as worthless and detrimental.

In summary, the establishment of an Inmate Management System gives administration, staff, and inmates the opportunity to develop a vision of rewards, expectations, and action in the operation of a jail facility. Additionally, the system allows administration to rely on staff to operate the facility and to provide the inmate population with opportunities for change.

In Orange County, the implementation of our Inmate Management System has reduced the average number of jail days for inmates and decreased construction costs by making it possible to de-institutionalize the facility.

For further information, contact Tom Allison, Director, Orange County Division of Corrections, Orlando, Florida, at telephone number (407) 648-3260. ■

